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A

# DISCOURSE

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF

## JULIUS R. FRIEDLANDER,

PRINCIPAL OF THE

PENNSYLVANIA INSTITUTION FOR THE BLIND,

AND DELIVERED, SUNDAY,

MARCH 24, 1839,

BY W. H. FURNESS,

PASTOR OF THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITARIAN CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA.

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# DISCOURSE.

JOB XXIX. 15, 16.

I WAS EYES TO THE BLIND, AND FEET WAS I TO THE LAME.
I WAS A FATHER TO THE POOR.

THE community in which we live, my hearers, is justly noted for the number and efficiency of its Benevolent Institutions. It has opened an asylum for almost every form of human wretchedness, and made liberal provisions for the protection and comfort of the helpless. The fact is an honourable one. But I do not mention it now for the sake of boasting. It is interesting from another and far higher point of view than that from which it is contemplated by our pride.

1. It furnishes impressive evidence of the benign influence of our common faith, of the

prevalence of the spirit of Christianity, which is the simple spirit of humanity enlightened, enlarged, and sanctified. It tells us that Jesus Christ did not teach and suffer—that his blood was not shed, in vain. He died to breathe the life of mercy and love into a hard and savage world. And wherever an active benevolence prevails, Christianity is producing its natural fruits. Christian communities are always distinguished for the abundance of their benefactions, for the hospitals and asylums which they have reared for human suffering. It is thus that Christendom differs from the rest of the world; and it is in this respect that it is entitled to be considered the peculiar abode of civilization.

I do not mean to imply that all among us who are active in the offices of charity are necessarily moved by a Christian spirit. We all know the contrary. We know how many worldly and sordid motives contribute to give force and direction to the several streams of the general bounty, how much the benevolent

affections are alloyed or neutralized by vanity, and the love of influence, and by self-seeking in other and less innocent forms. But it is a great step made in the progress of the world, and a striking proof of the power of Christianity, that active benevolence has become so fashionable, and so sure a way to respectability and personal success. Individuals would not affect it, were it not in so high repute. There is unquestionably existing among us a wide and deep sense of the claims of the unfortunate. It is felt that their misery may and ought to be alleviated, if labour, love, or money will avail. And herein, I repeat, do we discern the victory of Christian principles. Our charitable Institutions, as so many varied expressions of this conviction of society, are witnesses to the dominion of that Religion, whose spirit and aim it is to induce men to do good continually.

2. But furthermore. These institutions, with which our city abounds, not only testify to the influence of our common Christianity, they im-

pose upon us a manifest and peculiar obligation. In founding them, in supporting them, you virtually recognize the sacred right of the miserable to your sympathy and aid. Far more eloquently than any verbal declarations, however explicit and unqualified, these asylums of the wretched, these temples of Charity, proclaim your acknowledgment of the claims of humanity. They constitute, so to speak, the confession of your faith, and promulgate the law of your practice. They are the language, the words, written in stone, whereby our community declares itself bound to listen for the feeblest moan of human misery, and in all possible ways to relieve it.

As members of this social body, if you rejoice in the beneficence that graces it, then are you pledged never to relax your exertions, never to grow weary in your benevolent ministrations, so long as a trace of human sorrow is visible on the earth. Never must we meet appeals for our benefactions with the plea, "See how much we have done already. We can do no more. We have given our share." For the more we

have done, the more are we summoned to do. The noble monuments of charity among us point, not to repose, but to wider spheres and redoubled exertions. If he, who regularly attends public worship, thereby admits his religious obligations, with equal distinctness do we confess ourselves bound for ever to the blessed work of doing good, when we have once done a charitable deed. We have entered upon a course, whose duties multiply at every step, and which knows no termination but in the disappearance of every form and shadow of evil. We are brought hither into the vineyard of the Great Husbandman, not to till an allotted space, not to rear one plant, but to enlarge for ever the sphere of our labours, to penetrate more and more deeply into the great mass of man's wants, to understand them more thoroughly and sympathize with them more warmly. By our efforts, however hearty, wise, and prolonged, we purchase no liberty to stay our hands. On the contrary, they are our qualifications for still greater activity. And if there is one portion

of mankind, upon whom the obligation to do good incessantly presses with more weight than upon another, it is that community, wherever it may be found, here or elsewhere, that has carried on the divine work the farthest and the most successfully.

But I would fain believe it unnecessary to urge this consideration. If you have ever tasted the blessedness of relieving misery wisely and well, if you know what a privilege it is to make the widow's heart and the orphan's to sing for joy, to give feet to the lame, and eyes to the blind, and light and hope and liberty to the ignorant and vicious and degraded, you will need no incitement beyond the simple consciousness of doing good, the peace attendant upon a true motive and a generous act. You will only hunger and thirst to do more, and will account yourselves overpaid, although you have expended health and wealth in your self-forgetful labours. The truly generous man blesses God in the fulness of his heart, for the ability of doing good, and esteems himself only too

highly honoured in being qualified to imitate the Divine Love and distribute the Bounty of Heaven, no matter at what cost of ease, fortune, or life. He discovers a new value in his riches, if Providence has blessed him therewith, since they can buy for him this pearl above all price, the happiness of doing good. In the eyes of the devoted slaves of the world, of those misguided ones who mistake the shadow for the reality, and pursue the deceitful phantoms of sensual Pleasure and earthly Ambition, which, hovering over a concealed abyss, lead them to their ruin, the generous man is despised, for they imagine that he is throwing his wealth away. Throwing it away! He is turning it into a possession which time cannot reach, and which no outward revolutions, no fluctuations of commerce, no conflicts of the elements can rob him of. He is purchasing with it a crown of glory in comparison with which the costliest diadem that ever blazed upon the brows of a king is but the bauble of a little child. He is rearing for himself a monument in the inmost

living heart of the world, upon which angels shall delight to bend and gaze when earth's proudest mausoleums shall have crumbled into common dust.

Is there one who now hears me who does not assent to what I say? I trust in God, you know what a blessing, what a privilege it is to do a kind act in the pure spirit of Christian charity. But much I fear that we have as yet apprehended it but very dimly, or we should never grow impatient at the multitude of human griefs which clamour for our aid. If we lend a reluctant ear to the calls of charity and invent excuses to evade them, if our benevolence is short-lived and occasional, a random impulse and not a steadily increasing principle, if our hearts are growing sour and hard, when they should only be becoming more tender and considerate, it is because the scanty good which we have done, has been done from a defective and dishonourable motive. We looked, I suppose, for praise, or for gratitude. We wanted to be thanked and made much of, to have our

secret charities searched out and published. We have given our pittance to buy off importunity or to purchase an unlawful freedom, not considering that the hand which has once been extended in charity must never again be withheld from any good work, and that the divinest pleasure of doing good springs from the consciousness that our right hand hath given so secretly, that our left knoweth not of it.

I have spoken of our Benevolent Institutions, in the first place as they bear witness to the influence of our common faith, and then, as they increase and make still more urgent our obligations to redoubled activity. Were I now pressing upon your attention the claims of any particular charity, I would place them on the ground of your having already accomplished so much. I would not say that you had done nothing, but that you had done much, and therefore were you bound to do more. If there are any to whom the sons and daughters of want may appeal with peculiar confidence, it is

those whose hands have never been closed, whose hearts have never ceased to beat in sympathy with suffering.

3. Once more. Our Benevolent Institutions are interesting, not only on account of the direct good which they do in their several spheres—they exert an indirect influence of the happiest kind. Mercy in all its forms is twice blessed. We needed not the inspiration of the poet to tell us that. Love blesses the givers as well as the receivers. It not only lifts up those that are bowed down, it locks in a fraternal embrace the hands of those who are engaged together in raising up the prostrate. It pours its copious balm into the hearts which misfortune has pierced and broken, and at the same moment the souls of those who are united in the discharge of its angel-offices, are softened by the sacred stream; their sympathies run together, and they become one.

Through ignorance of human nature and of one another, men are estranged from

men. In this state of estrangement, they magnify their respective peculiarities of thought and of living. As they care not for one another, they care not to find truth and good any where save in their own little circle. All beyond is the blackness of error and wilful delusion. Thus division-lines are drawn, and parties and sects are formed, and names are taken or given, which, like words of magic have power to conjure up love or hatred, the spirits of light or of darkness, and to turn the heart into sweetness or into gall; and the beings who were formed of one blood to dwell together as members of one great household, are filled with jealousies, suspicions, and all uncharitableness, and the simplest dictates of common feeling are unheeded, the plainest principles of common justice trampled on without remorse. But let some work of undisputed charity be proposed, a work that appeals to the common sentiments of humanity, let it attract and bring together, as it will, men of different prejudices, of opposing opinions in regard to other subjects, and a

fatal blow is struck at the deadly spirit of sectarianism. To their surprise, it may be, men begin to discover that those whom they abhorred as the enemies of truth and of God, and as *their* enemies of course, are fashioned by the Creator all one with themselves, that in regard to the good proposed to be done, they really feel exactly as *they* do, with the same warmth, with the same alacrity for action. And as they are honest themselves, however mistaken, they are secretly rejoiced to find that there is any common ground—that they can trust their fellow-men and respect and honour them.

This is the way in which Christianity quietly and secretly gains its firmest footholds, and its noblest triumphs. Thus it works most effectually to humanize our race, and displace the harsh and bloody customs of war with the spirit of gentleness and the arts of peace. Not by its doctrinal declarations, explicit as they are, not by arguments and reasoning, however cogent and unanswerable, does it win its way, but by direct appeals to the principles belong-

ing to all hearts, to our simple sense of right, to the sympathies which plead with us for the sufferer. In engaging men in works of active beneficence, in drawing their attention to him whose crown it was that he went about doing good continually, it aims to draw off their thoughts from their differences, and fix them upon the points wherein they agree. Like rejoices in like, and it is always more natural, as well as more reasonable, that we should love one another for the respects in which we are alike than that we should hate one another for our disagreements. By producing this union of heart, Christianity seeks, and in this way principally, to produce unanimity of opinion, so far as the latter is desirable or possible. It converts the world through the world's affections, not through its theories. Bring men to feel alike, and then if they do not immediately think alike, the difference is of little moment, and is chiefly speculative.

And thus, too, our Benevolent Institutions, as the children and the servants of Christianity,

have done and will do much to break down the partition-walls of sects. It is true, and it cannot be disguised, bigotry has not yet become a mere tradition. It still exists, although shorn of much of its strength. It still loves to denounce and condemn, to foment suspicion and distrust, to set at nought the simple claims of justice, and to impede the sacred cause of freedom, civil and religious. I wish I could say that our charitable Institutions themselves were never invaded and shackled by this anti-christian spirit. But still, that we do not see more of it, that its brow of brass has been broken, that the blood-stained instruments of torture have been wrenched from its grasp, that it is reduced from blows to hard words, that, whereas it once thundered forth its anathemas, encouraged by the terrors of the civil power, it is now forced to whisper and go softly—all this is owing, in a great and good measure, to that indirect influence of our benevolent Institutions to which I have referred. To so many labours of love and moral reform have we been called,

that we have lost and are losing all inclination to aggravate our differences. And besides, men of opposite persuasions, of different religious associations have been brought together. Notwithstanding the frightful names which they have given one another, they have found human hearts in human bosoms, and have at least ceased to fear and hate, if they have not yet learned to love one another in unfeigned charity. Names have no longer the potency they once had. All now of every name, popular and unpopular, are found labouring side by side in the same fields of active charity, having thrown off their several peculiarities, and toiling there upon common ground, learning the sacred lesson of mutual respect, and according to others the rights which they ask for themselves.

The present topic of discourse, as you will readily perceive, my brethren, has been suggested by the recent loss which the cause of active Benevolence has sustained in this city, and, I may say, not in this city alone, but throughout

our country, by the death of the lamented Principal of the Institution for the instruction of the Blind. He came hither little more than six years ago, a stranger, bringing high testimonials to his worth from the bosom of a distant community. Whether he had been nurtured as a Jew or a Christian, a Catholic or Protestant, Trinitarian or Unitarian, we knew not. After the acquaintance I had the pleasure of enjoying with him I cannot now say, for I do not know, what were his peculiar religious opinions. I only know that he admitted fully and without qualification the right of every man to form his own opinions for himself, and denied the wisdom and the justice of introducing the peculiarities of sects into such an institution as that over which he was called to preside. If this admission and this denial are peculiar to the professors of our form of faith, as I trust they are not, then was our departed friend, in these respects, a member of our religious denomination. He came hither not as a needy adventurer, but from the impulse of an earnest and quiet enthusiasm, prompting him to leave an

affectionate and intelligent circle of kindred, and powerful and warmly attached friends, for the sake of the Blind. Education and experience had conferred upon him singular qualifications for the office which he sought to discharge, qualifications, which justified his enthusiasm, and of which this community has had decisive proofs. It was apparent to all who knew him, to all who had the opportunity of witnessing his course among us, that he was inspired with a high ambition. He thought not of making a comfortable place for himself. His aim was to advance the cause of the education of the Blind throughout a country whose political institutions, he believed, fitted it in a peculiar manner for every benevolent enterprise. He ardently desired to see the Pennsylvania Institution for the Blind the model of all similar institutions, and made no account of personal ease, of health, or of life, in the endeavour to make it so. He was continually studying the wants of the Blind, and devising the best means for their intellectual and

moral culture. He proposed to himself no limit in the way of improvement. And that his efforts were beginning to be appreciated, striking evidence has been given. It was but yesterday that a letter arrived, addressed to him from Glasgow in Scotland, enclosing a specimen sheet of printing executed for the Blind School in that city, and in accordance with the style and method which he had proposed. This testimonial came too late. The eyes which it would have gladdened were closed in death. The heart, whose failing pulses it would have quickened with pleasure, had ceased to beat. But the most touching proof of his worth was the strong affection of his pupils, which told how his heart had been engaged in the work of instruction. When he died they wept for him as for their best earthly friend. And the eyes that "roll in vain and find no dawn," although they can discharge no other office, expressed by the tears that streamed from them, how truly he was loved.

I have felt that such a man must not pass

away without a special notice. It is mentioned by the prophet as a melancholy sign of moral insensibility, of a brutish and corrupt age, that the righteous die and no man layeth it to heart. Our departed friend deserves to be remembered by the community at large, as he will long be remembered by the blind children whom he blest. And there seemed to be a peculiar propriety in recording a public testimony to his invaluable services here, in this church. To the steady and devoted exertions of one venerable member of this society, of whom I dare not trust myself now to speak more particularly,* and to the munificent bequest of another,† one of the founders of this Christian society, the Institution for the Blind is especially indebted for its rapid prosperity. I doubt whether the growth of any other benevolent institution among us has been so speedy and uninterrupted. Our re-

* John Vaughan, whose active and honourable old age may Heaven prolong!

† W. Y. Birch, who bequeathed to the Institution for the Blind, property to the amount of nearly two hundred thousand dollars.

spected friends, who have been so warmly interested in its establishment, who have laboured so judiciously, giving their time and their wealth without stint, have shown not the slightest disposition to favour any peculiarities of their own. They have never once thought to obtain any conditions for their distinctive religious opinions, but have united with their brethren of other denominations with one heart and mind to build up this noble Institution. It is based upon the broad principle of Christian Liberty. And as thus far all sectarian peculiarities have been unknown in the administration of its concerns, we devoutly trust that it will continue to be the praise and glory of the School for the Blind, that it recognises no doctrines save those in which all the friends of Benevolence, of every religious name, agree. The influence of him who may in simple justice be honoured as its founder, and of our departed friend who so liberally endowed it, will, we rejoice to believe, prove a shield, to protect it from the poisoned arrows of Sectarianism. It has now met with a loss which we cannot easi-

ly estimate. But it has gained a sacred and imperishable treasure in the blessed memory of its late Principal. That shall long hover over it, like a hallowed influence from above, consecrating the spot which witnessed his faithful labours. Long and affectionately will it be cherished in the hearts of those children. Attuned though their spirits are to melody, they have known no sweeter sound than the music of that voice which first invited them into the boundless and brilliant world of mental improvement. And long, very long will it be ere its echoes cease to linger in their memories.

That the useful are taken and the useless and worse than useless are left, we are disposed to account a mystery. It is mysterious only through the dimness of our sight. The faithful, when they quit this world, go to higher spheres of action, where they are needed more, and may render nobler services. For Heaven is rest only from weakness, error, and sin. In all other respects, it is a state of increased activity; and they whose career of usefulness

is terminated on earth, are still diligently serving Him, whose throne is in the heavens and whose kingdom is over all beings living and dead, over all worlds seen and unseen; and He will render to them and to all men according to their works. Here is the rock of our faith. The Lord God omnipotent, all-righteous reigneth. Serve him instantly day and night. Be ye steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour cannot be in vain.